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CALPURNIA, HERE I COME

Now, as the college year approaches its mid-point, one fact emerges clearly: *you are all going to flunk everything.*

There are two things you can do about it. First, you can marry money. (I don't mean you marry the money itself. I mean you marry a person who has money. Weddings between people and currency have *not* been legal anywhere in the United States since the Stuart-Hawley Act. Marlboro Cigarettes, on the other hand, are legal everywhere and are, indeed, smoked with great pleasure and enthusiasm in all fifty states of the Union. I bring up Marlboro Cigarettes because this column is sponsored by the makers of Marlboro, and they are inclined to brood if I omit to mention their product.)

But I digress. I was saying you can marry money but, of course, you will not because you are a high-minded, clean-living, pure-hearted, freckle-faced American kid. Therefore, to keep from flunking, you must try the second method: you must learn how to take lecture notes.

According to a recent survey, 123.6% of American undergraduates do not know the proper way to take lecture notes. To illustrate this shocking statistic, let us suppose you are taking a course in history. Let us further suppose the lecturer is lecturing on the ruling houses of England. You listen intently. You write diligently in your notebook, making a topic outline as you have been taught. Like this:

I. House of Plantagenet.
II. House of Lancaster.
III. House of York.

Then you stop. You put aside your pen. You blink back a tear, for you cannot go on. Oh, yes, you know very well that the next ruling house is the House of Tudor. The trouble is you don't know the Roman numeral that comes after III.

(It may, incidentally, be of some historical interest to point out that Americans are not the only people who don't know Roman numerals. The Romans didn't know them themselves. I suppose they could tell you how much V or X were or like that, but when it came to real cuties like LXI or MMC, they just flung away their styluses and went downtown to have a bath and take in a circus and maybe stab Caesar a few times.

(You may wonder why Rome stuck with these ridiculous numerals when the Arabs had such a nice, simple system. Well sir, the fact is that the Emperor Vespasian tried like crazy to buy the Arabic numerals from Suleiman the Magnificent, but Suleiman wouldn't do business—not even when Vespasian raised his bid to 100,000 gold piastres, plus he offered to throw in the Colosseum, the Appian Way, and Charlton Heston.

(So Rome stuck with Roman numerals—to its sorrow, as it turned out. One day in the Forum, Cicero and Pliny got to arguing about how much is CDLI minus MVIX. Well sir, pretty soon everyone in town came around to join the hassle. In all the excitement, nobody remembered to lock the north gate and —wham!—before you could say *pere fortier*, in rushed the Goths, the Visigoths, and the Green Bay Packers!)

Well sir, that's the way the empire crumbles, and I digress. Let's get back to lecture notes. Let's also say a word about Marlboro Cigarettes. The makers would be so pleased! And is it not fitting that we should please those honest tobacconists—those fine men, fond of square dancing, water sports, protein, and fairness—those tireless perfectionists who spend all of their days trying to please us—searching everywhere for the best of all possible tobaccos, aging them with patience, blending them with tender, loving care? Marlboros are available in soft pack and flip top box. You will find XX cigarettes in each package.

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Marlborum amo, Tom Marlborum amat, Dick Marlborum amat, Harry Marlborum amat, Jane Marlborum amat, Joan Marlborum amat, Jean Marlborum amat, Jane Marlborian amat, quique Marlborum amant—et Marlborum quoque amabitis.

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